



# Precise steps keep to the pointe

## DANCE

Mixed Bill  
 Ballet du Grand Theatre de Geneve  
 His Majesty's Theatre  
 Review: Tim Balfour

It's always a light-bulb moment when you attend an evening of dance that reminds you why you're interested in dance in the first place. This is the feeling you get while watching the Australian premiere of Ballet du Grand Theatre de Geneve's Mixed Bill— three intoxicating contemporary dance works free from fussiness and pretentiousness.

One of the first things you might notice about this company is its collective technical range, precision and strength — an earthy, grounded ease of movement underpinned by classical technique. But while this internationally diverse company of dancers cedes to a uniformity of movement, each has a distinctive physicality and expressiveness.

Saburo Teshigawara's aesthetically abstract Para-Dice opens the program. It's a light yet dynamic piece that, in a heartbeat, shifts from soft, flowing lines to a weightless rapidity of movement.

The dynamic contrasts in Teshigawara's choreography work to effect, especially in sections where explosive movements flow into smooth, unexpected transitions. Such moments are, presumably, designed to articulate Teshigawara's

Para-Dice theme linking paradise and games of chance. Willi Bopp's eclectic score successfully submerses the listener further into Teshigawara's world.

Greek choreographer Andonis Foniadakis' Selon Desir (According to Desire) begins with a feverish solo. As a woman jackknives her body and drives a mass of wild hair towards the floor in one snapping movement, opening choruses of Bach's St Matthew and St John passions reverberate.

Dancers dressed in a mix of vibrantly coloured skirts, pants, leggings and kneepads merge into groups, trios, couples and all permutations besides.

They make frenzied appeals to the heavens with outstretched arms, virtuoso leaps, and crucifix-shaped lifts, but all in vain as their boneless bodies repeatedly collapse back to earth. These sequences create an interesting ambiguity between passion, desire and violence.

A carnal sexuality also pervades Foniadakis' work, marked by single pelvic thrusts from behind the women, and a general display of provocative, visceral moves.

Foniadakis manages this busy, en masse work with precision, and skilfully draws the observer's gaze wherever he wants it to go.

Peppered throughout with amusing anecdotes and gymnastic-style antics, Belgian choreographer Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui's Loin (Far) has a more

theatrical leaning. Unlike similar dance works that take this approach, however, Cherkaoui's forays into theatre complement rather than overwhelm the dance.

Loin scrutinises common preconceptions regarding the distance between peoples, eras and cultures. Wearing subtle variations on traditional dress, the dancers engage in delicate, circling hand movements and counterbalance work. These intimate interactions give way to comic anecdotes of dance tours in foreign lands, where the rats and cockroaches feature highly in their gauche retelling. And in case you missed it, a later rendition of On the Road to Gundagai rams home Loin's message to an Australian audience.

The main pas de deux sections in Loin were technically and artistically sublime — not a hand out of place by the men, and each lift and leg extension had a purposeful trajectory. A number of solos were also performed with moving artistry.

Towards the end of the piece, two passive-resistant men burden a male dancer's arms. Each drag and twist of the two men is laboured, like moving through honey, and the ensuing trio is magnetic. The company eventually rolls into a unified whole and a satisfying conclusion to a memorable evening.

**Mixed Bill ends tomorrow.**



**Precision:** Ballet du Grand Theatre de Geneve perform Mixed Bill, a memorable evening of dance.

Picture: Astrid Volzke